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Nov. 1.

Introduction

On the following pages I am going to try and show you how to build what I call a water snare, which if properly constructed will take the first otter, mink or muskrat that passes, going either up or down stream. I will also describe a marten and fisher snare that I originated several years ago.

Some trappers, in fact most of them, place no confidence at all in a deadfall or snare. For my part I prefer a deadfall every time where it is possible to use one, for if it is properly made and given time to season it will take and hold anything, with two exceptions, fox and wolf, and will take the smartest old mink that ever turned up his whiskers at the best steel trap, land set, you ever made.

The two deadfalls I am going to describe would hardly do for mink, and the remarks I just made refer to other and differently constructed deadfalls.

And here is a point in favor of deadfalls and snares. It is this: You always have to go way back from civilization for marten and fisher. If you depend on steel traps it doesn't take many of them to weigh a dickens of a lot, and they will weigh twice as much coming out in the spring as they did going in the fall before.

If you go in prepared to build wire deadfalls, you need nothing more than a few staples and a little wire to make deadfalls that are sure of holding anything that springs them.

It is possible for the jaw of a steel trap to throw an animal's foot out and only catch him by a toe or claw, in which case you don't get him.

And when you come out of the big woods in the spring you can leave your line with an easy mind. "Johnnie Sneekum" won't get away with many of your deadfalls, and if you never go back you won't be losing much.

All this talk about what I think isn't getting us very far, so what do you say we build a deadfall?

G. F. S.

PLATE 1.

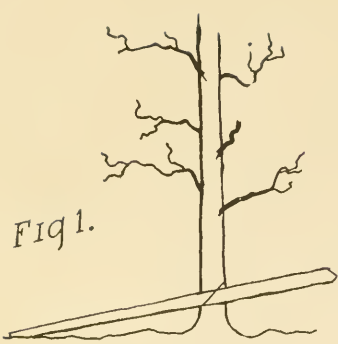


Fig 1.

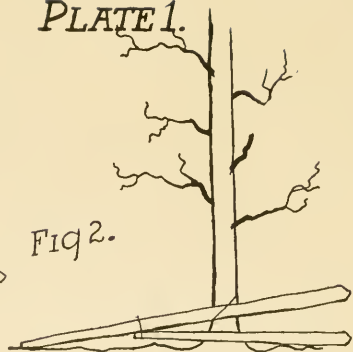


Fig 2.



Fig 3.

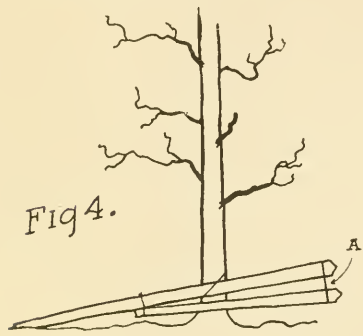


Fig 4.

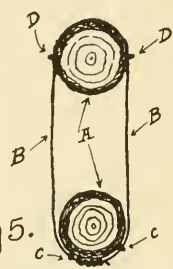


Fig 5.

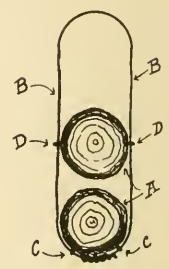


Fig 6.

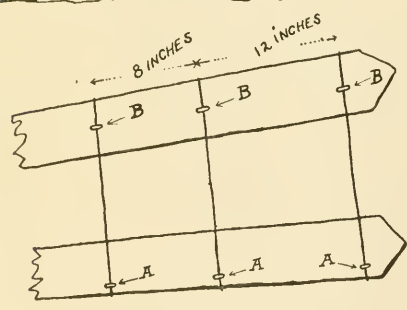


Fig 7.

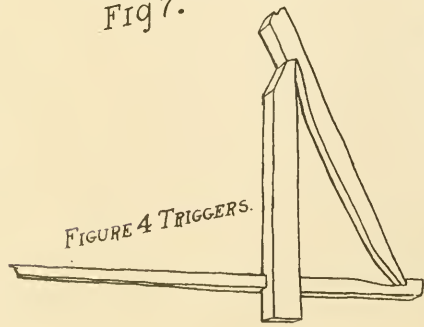
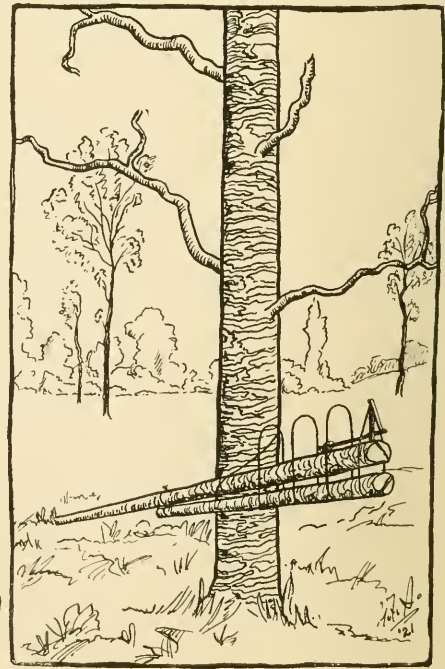


FIGURE 4 TRIGGERS.



A Marten and Fisher Deadfall

Cut a pole about 6 inches in diameter at the butt end and 18 feet long. Trim it of branches up to within a few feet of the small end and wire it to another pole or small tree about four feet from the ground with about 6 feet of the large end extending beyond the tree, as in Fig. 1, Plate 1.

Cut and trim another pole the same size and about 12 feet long and secure it with strong wire to the under side of the first pole so it can be raised and lowered, as in Fig. 2, Plate 1. Then make a loop of wire 6 inches wide and 20 inches long, as in Fig. 3, Plate 1.

Lift the short pole up that is wired to the under side of the first pole that you fastened to the tree and slip the wire over the end of the two poles, as at A, Fig. 4, Plate 1. Drive a couple of staples into the under side of the lower pole (drive them in tight) to secure the loop, and then drive one on each side of the upper pole to act as guides for the loop to slide through. Fig. 5 is an end view of the two poles, AA is the two poles, B is the loop of wire, C is the staples driven into the bottom pole to hold the wire loop, and D shows the two staples in the sides of the upper pole. Do not drive them in over half way, or be sure that they are loose enough that the loops can slip through them.

Fig. 6 shows the lower pole raised up close under the upper pole. AA the poles, B wire loop, C staples securing loop to lower pole, and D guide staples in the upper pole.

Now place two more loops back of the first one, as shown in Fig. 7, and secure them as you did the first one; notice Fig 7, A, shows the staples in the lower pole driven in tight, and B is the staple in the upper pole driven in half way for a guide.

Now you will see that by raising the lower pole up under the upper pole and fitting a set of triggers under the first loop as in Fig. 8 (I have always used the old figure four triggers), you have a marten and fisher deadfall that is hard to beat. It is up off the ground, away from the mice and out of any ordinary snow, and it can be raised still higher in case of an extra heavy snow.

Lean a heavy limb or piece of pole against the upper pole, a foot or so back of the loops, for the marten to climb. He crawls



Fisher in a wire deadfall



Marten in a wire deadfall

along the upper pole under the loops to get at the bait, and when he trips the triggers the lower pole falls, bringing the two loops down across his back.

As a matter of fact, three back loops are better than two for a fisher is so much larger and stronger than a marten that I have had them crawl out from under the second loop, and found them with only one loop holding them across the hips. Notice the photograph of a fisher in a deadfall on another page.

You can easily put a roof over the business end of the deadfall by nailing four forked sticks upright on the upper pole, one on each side out at the end and one on each side a few inches back of the last loop; then place a couple of sticks in the forks with a few boughs on top, which will protect the triggers from snow and the bait from *some* birds. If you know of any way to protect or hide a bait from a magpie, a bluejay or a camprobber (whiskey-jack) please let me in on it.

For wire I have used ordinary galvanized telephone wire, but I suppose that baling wire would do if it was sound and not too badly rusted.

A Marten and Fisher Snare

If I have any preference at all between the deadfall I just described and the snare we are going to try now, it is in favor of this snare, but it is going to be hard to explain, not that there is anything complicated about it, but my ability was badly strained explaining that deadfall and it may break on this snare. Let's go.

In the first place we need two triggers. Make them of stiff wire, about as heavy as an 8D common nail, or a trifle heavier. Cut a piece about 5 inches long and bend it as shown in Fig. 1, Plate 2. Cut another piece and shape it as shown in Fig 2, Plate 2.

Pick out a tree about 7 inches in diameter and peel the bark off a spot 3 inches wide and 8 inches long. Do this about 5 feet from the ground. Now slip a small staple through the ring in the first trigger you made and drive it into the center of the peeled spot on the tree, about 2 inches from the lower edge. See Fig. 3, Plate 2. A is the trigger, B is the staple.

Hold the second trigger up on the peeled spot so that the long

PLATE 2.

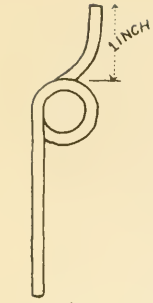


Fig 1.



Fig 2.

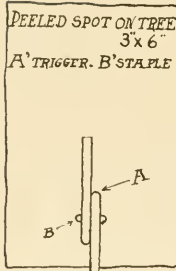


Fig 3.

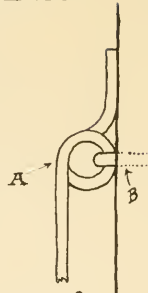


Fig 3.

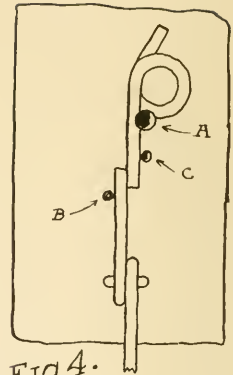


Fig 4.

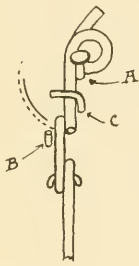


Fig 5.

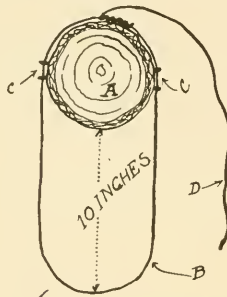


Fig 6.

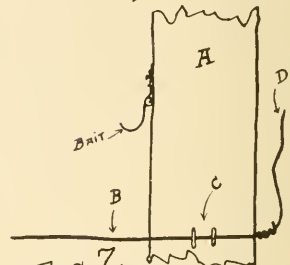


Fig 7.

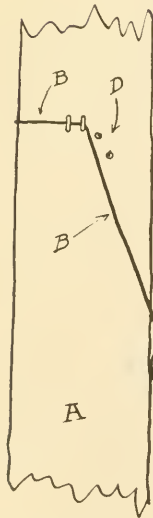


Fig 8.



Fig 9.



end extends one-quarter of an inch below the upper end of the first trigger, and drive a 6D nail into the tree in the angle of the loop in the second trigger; leave one-half inch of the nail sticking out. Notice Fig. 4. A shows the location of this nail.

Cut the heads off two smaller nails and drive one in on the left-hand side of the upper end of trigger No. 1 just below the end of trigger No. 2, so that when trigger No. 2 swings around to the left pivoted on nail A, Fig. 4, it will not strike it. B, Fig. 4, shows the location of this nail; let it stick out one-half inch.

Drive the other headless nail in on the right-hand side of the second trigger just above the upper end of trigger No. 1; leave about three-quarters of an inch sticking out, and bend it over trigger No. 2 to the left, so it forms a hook to hold trigger No. 2 close to the tree. Do not bend it so tight that the trigger can't slip out to the left. It swings to the left pivoted on nail A, Fig. 4, when the lower end of trigger No. 1, which holds the bait, is jerked down. The curved line and arrow in Fig. 5 shows the swing of trigger No. 2.

Consider the side of the tree that you put these triggers on as the front of the tree. Now make a loop of wire on the tree so that standing on the front side and pulling loop tight against the back of tree, it will extend out in front about 10 inches. Do not make a slip-knot, but twist it tight, leaving an end of wire about 20 inches long. Note Fig. 6. A is a cross-section of tree, B is the wire loop, and D is the 20-inch end of wire you left on the loop.

On each side of the tree and about 8 inches below the lower end of trigger No. 1, remove the bark from two spots as large as your hand and then hold the loop there and drive in two staples about half way and about one and one-half inches apart. They are to act as guides for the loop to slide through. CC in Figs. 6 and 7 show these staples.

Cut a pole about 5 or 6 inches in diameter and lay it at the back of the tree with the small end extending to the left. Lift this pole and wire the loop to it about 1 foot from the end, using the 20-inch end of wire you left on the loop. Of course, I mean the large end of the pole.

Drop the pole now and it will jerk the loop tight against the tree. Notice Fig. 8. A is the tree, B the loop, and C the end of the drop pole. Drive two nails about where the two dots are (located by arrows D in Fig. 8), so that when the drop pole falls

the wire loop won't bend so sharp over the staples. Notice Fig. 9. A little experimenting will show you where these two nails should go. Lift the drop pole until it is just back of or on a level with the two guide staples. Prop a stick under it to hold it there, then twist a piece of wire in the loop or ring in trigger No. 2, hook the trigger over nail A, Fig. 4, hold it there with your left hand and draw wire tight down to the drop pole and wire it to the pole about half way between the end of the pole and where the loop is fastened.

Now slip the upper end of trigger No. 1 in between the lower end of trigger No. 2 and nail B, Fig. 4; hold it there while you remove the stick you placed under the drop pole, and the snare is set.

Bend the end of trigger No. 1 into a hook as shown in Fig. 7, spear the bait on this hook and nail a small bushy limb on the side of the tree to form a sort of roof over the bait to hide it from birds. Lean a piece of pole against the tree so that the upper end is about eight inches below the loop, and any marten or fisher that climbs up and touches the bait jars the upper end of trigger No. 1 away from trigger No. 2, it flips around nail A, Fig. 4, and the drop pole will fall, jerking the loop tight.

The snare is as fast as lightning and anything that springs it will never get out, as it trips so fast and hard, and as the two guide staples and the two nails, D. Fig. 8, are not roller-bearing pulleys, it won't give an inch of slack to anything it once springs on.

This description is long and tiresome, but a little study will make it plain, and after you have made one or two you can put them up in a few minutes. I have built sixteen a day on short winter days, but of course I had the triggers already made.

You can regulate the tripping of the snare (make it trip heavy or light) by using a shorter or longer No. 2 trigger, and it will work better if you peel the bark off the back of the tree where the drop pole rubs against the tree.

I have never used this snare for anything but marten and fisher, but it will work equally as well on anything else with a few exceptions, as for instance, fox, mink and otter.



Nine feet of snow



Camp

PLATE 3.

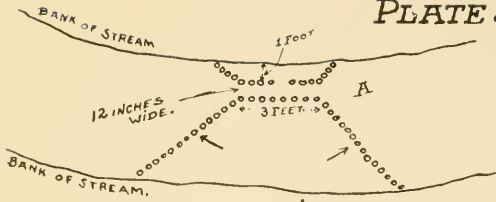


Fig 1

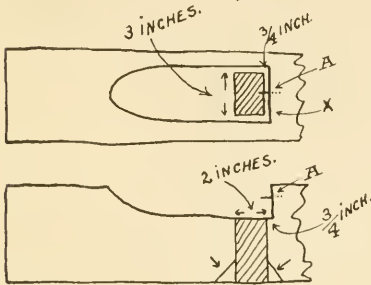


Fig 3.

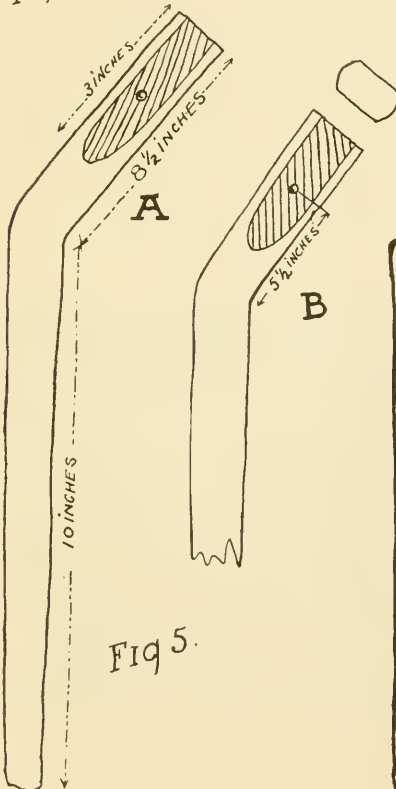


Fig 5.

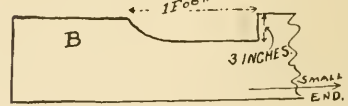
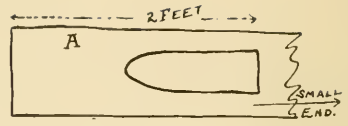


Fig 2.

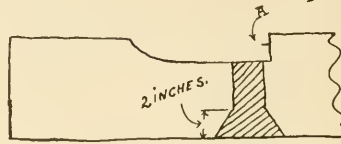


Fig 4.

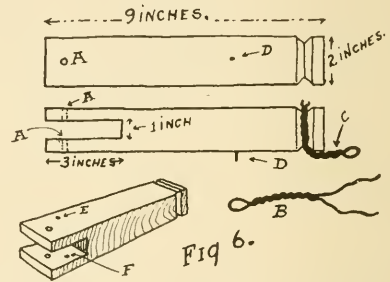
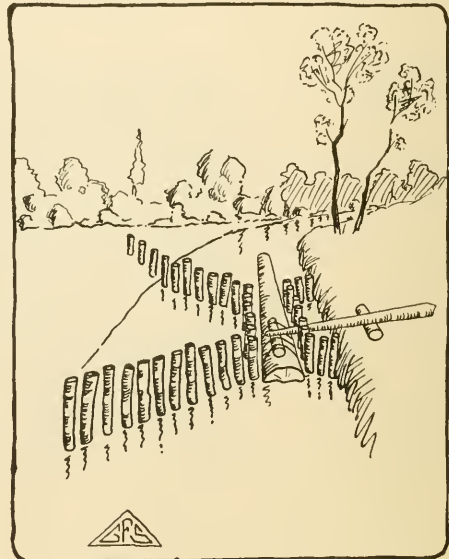


Fig 6.



A Water Snare

This water snare will take longer to build than the deadfall and snare we just finished, but it is worth every bit of the time it takes. It all depends on the width of the stream you put it on—the wider the stream, the longer it will take to build.

Find a place where the water is about 2 feet deep next to a bank that is about 18 inches high. If it is much higher than that it will be quite a job to set the snare and remove fur from it from off the bank. If you wear rubber boots on your trap line “you should worry” about wet feet.

And if it is a wide stream, try and find this 2 feet of water, next to a bank 18 inches high, in the narrowest place on the stream. It would be better if the water is fairly still, or if it has any current it should be steady—no eddies or cross-currents.

Cut and sharpen a lot of stakes, the larger they are in diameter the better. Drive them in the stream as shown in Fig 1, Plate 3. The small circles or dots represent stakes and they should be driven on a little slant outward, as the heavy arrows in Fig. 1 indicate, so that anything coming up or down stream will not be able to climb them, but will be forced to go through the opening marked A, Fig. 1, Plate 3.

The stakes forming the two sides of the opening A should be driven in straight, and be sure to leave out two or three on the side next to the bank. See D, Fig 8, Plate 4. You can reach through that opening to set the snare and remove fur.

All the stakes should extend at least 18 inches above the water. If the shallow side of the stream has a high bank that a mink can't climb, just run the fence to it and stop. If not, you will have to run the fence back a way, either with the stakes or with logs or brush. The idea is to force the “varmint” into the water and through the opening A, Fig. 1, Plate 3.

Cut a log about 10 feet long and 10 inches in diameter at the large end. Float it in the water to find which side lays up and mark that side for the top. Now about 2 feet back from the large end saw and chop a notch in this top side as shown in Fig. 2, Plate 3. A shows how it appears looking down on it, and B

PLATE 4.

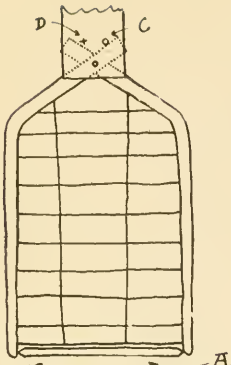


Fig 7.

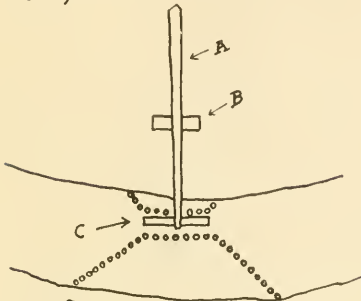


Fig 9.

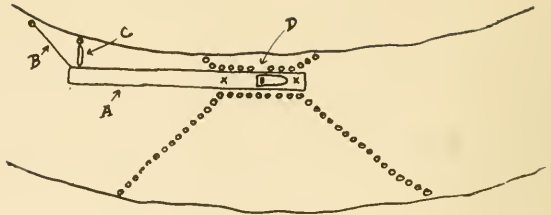


Fig 8.

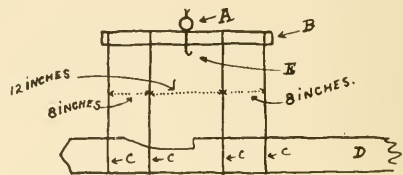


Fig 10.

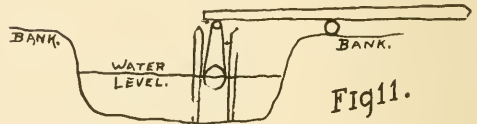


Fig 11.

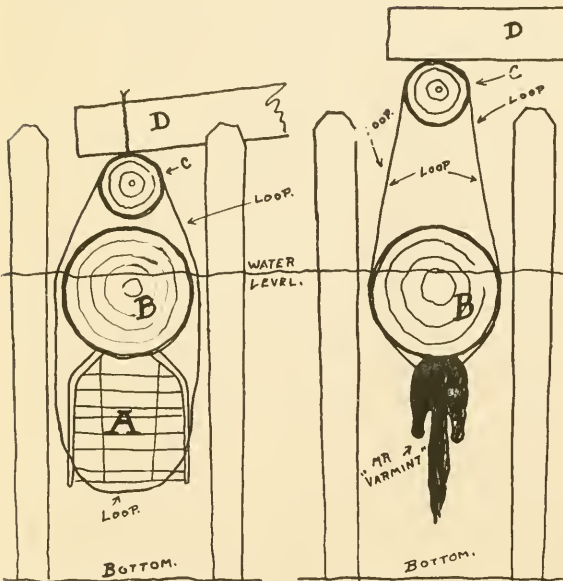


Fig 12.

Fig 13.

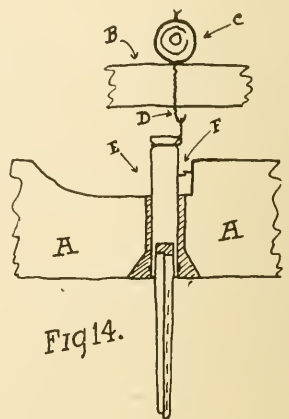


Fig 14.



looking at it from the side. Figs. 2, 3 and 4 show only a couple of feet of the large end of the log.

Chop a hole through the log, in the notch, as indicated by the shaded portion in Fig. 3. Make it 2 inches wide and 3 inches long, and place it three-quarters of an inch from the edge of the notch marked X, Fig. 3. Turn the log over and trim the edges of the hole as indicated by the heavy arrows in Figs. 3 and 4.

Trim the four edges of the hole in this manner, but do not run the bevel in over 2 inches. See Fig. 4.

Cut the head off an 8D nail and drive it into the end of the notch about half way from the bottom to the top and even with the center of the hole you cut through the log. The arrows marked A in Figs. 3 and 4 locate the nail. Leave a half-inch or more sticking out.

Now find two limbs, something sound and strong, about three-quarters of an inch in diameter, with a bend or kink in them about as illustrated in Fig. 5; flatten with a knife about 3 inches of the end of each one on both sides. Do not thin them down to less than one-half inch. The shaded portion in Fig. 5 shows this.

Drill a small hole in each one (about one-eighth inch) just 5 ½ inches from the inside of the bend, as in B, Fig. 5.

Take a piece of soft wood 2x2x9 inches long and cut a slot in one end and a notch around the other end, as illustrated in Fig. 6, then drill a small hole through both prongs of the slot as shown at A, Fig. 6. Now if the ends of the two crooked sticks are about one-half inch thick where you flattened them down and the slot in the 2x2x9 is 1 inch wide, slip the two sticks into slot and put an 8D nail through the hole in the 2x2x9, through the holes in the two sticks and out through the hole on the other side of the 2x2x9. Either bend the nail over or rivet it there. See Fig. 7, Plate 4.

Now fit a stick, A, Fig. 7, Plate 4, between the ends of the two prongs and stretch catgut (old leaders used in fishing) back and forth between them, either through holes drilled in the prongs or tie them in notches cut for that purpose about an inch apart. See Fig. 7, Plate 4. The two that run up and down should be knotted to each one running crossways to keep them from spreading. Soak the catgut for an hour before you use it, and stretch it as tight as you can without breaking it.

Now with the stick between the lower ends of the prongs and the catgut still stretched tight, drill a small hole through the front half of the 2x2x9, as at C, Fig. 7, and one on the other side at D, Fig. 7. See also E and F, Fig. 6. Now a small wooden peg (about the size of a match stem should be right) placed in each one of the holes flush with the outside and allowed to extend in far enough to catch the upper end of the prongs, will hold them rigid as long as the snare is set, but should be light enough to break and allow the prongs to fold together when the snare is tripped.

Double a piece of strong wire and twist it for about 2 inches, which will make an eye, as at B, Fig. 6. Twist it around the 2x2x9 in the notch you cut near one end. Let the loop or ring extend about 1 inch beyond the end and see that the loop is on the side of the 2x2x9 that has the head of the nail.

Now launch your large log and float the large end down into the opening in the fence marked A, Fig. 1, with the 2x3-inch hole in the center of the opening A. That would be 18 inches from each end. Secure it there by running a wire from the upper end of the log upstream to a stake near the bank and under water if possible, and wire a stick to the end of the log and over to the bank to hold it the proper distance from the bank. See Fig. 8, Plate 4. A is the log, B the wire upstream and C the stick holding it from the bank.

Cut a balance-pole about 8 inches in diameter at the large end and about 18 feet long. Lay a piece of log or rock on the bank for it to balance over and lay it with the small end out over the opening, A, Fig. 1. See Fig. 9. A is the balance-pole, B the short log for it to balance over.

Cut a length of pole 4 inches in diameter and 2½ feet long and wire it to the under side of the balance-pole. See Fig. 9. C is the short piece of pole.

Double another piece of strong wire, twist it for about 3 inches and shape the twisted end into a hook, then twist the other end around the center of the piece you just fastened to the balance-pole. The hook should be directly underneath in the center. E, Fig. 10, locates this hook.

Now prop the back end of the balance-pole up until the under side of the short cross-piece is just 18 inches from the top side of the large log. The hook on the under side of the cross-piece should be directly over the headless nail in the notch in the large

log. See A, Fig 3, Plate 3. Put four loops (galvanized telephone wire) over the cross-piece and down under the large log, as in Fig. 10. A is the balance-pole, B the short length of pole fastened to the small end of the balance-pole, C C C C are the four loops of wire, and D the large log. Secure these loops to the pole, B, Fig. 10, with a couple of staples and drive a staple into each side of the large log to act as guides for loops to slide through.

Drive a headless nail into the 2x2x9 about 2 inches from the top end and on the same side that the head of the nail is on; that holds the two prongs. Leave about one-half sticking out and flatten the upper side a little with a file.

It is hard for me to say just where this nail goes, but 2 inches should be about right.

Now if that "hickey" with the prongs and catgut (we will call it the trigger) is cocked, I mean the prongs spread apart and the catgut stretched tight and the two pegs are in the holes, D and C, Fig. 7, and the stick removed from between the lower ends of the prongs, take the trigger in your left hand, reach down under the large log and pass the end with the loop on it through the 2x3-inch hole in the large log, pull the balance-pole down with your right hand and slip the loop, C, Fig. 6, Plate 3, over the hook on the under side of the cross-piece. Then hook the nail, D, Fig. 6, Plate 3, on trigger under the nail, A, Fig. 3, Plate 3, in the notch in the large log and the snare is set.

Fig. 12 shows the snare set. A is the trigger, B is the end of the large log, C is the end of the short cross-piece on the balance-pole, and D is the balance-pole.

Fig. 13 shows the snare tripped. See also Fig. 11.

Fig. 14 is a "close up" of the way the trigger mechanism is arranged. A is the large log, B is the cross-piece on the balance-pole that the loops are fastened to, C is the end of the balance-pole, and D is the hook on the under side of the cross-piece with the loop on the trigger hooked over it, E is the upper end of the trigger, and F is the flattened nail on the trigger hooked under the nail in the notch on the large log. See A, Fig. 3, Plate 3.

Now when anything comes along (an otter, mink or muskrat) he is already in the water or is forced in by the fence. He investigates the barrier until he notices the stronger current coming through the opening under the large log. He dives down, and

as the opening seems to be clear (for he can't see the catgut laced across the trigger), he tries to go through and bumps his nose against it.

That jars the nail in the trigger from under the nail in the notch in the large log, up goes the balance-pole, and as soon as the prongs of the trigger come in contact with the edges of the hole in the large log the pegs break holding the prongs apart, they fold together and come up through the hole, and about that time two of the wire loops are holding Mr. Whatever-it-is up against the under side of the log, where he soon drowns.

You may have to study the drawings over several times to get the idea, and when you build it you may find some of the measurements I give are wrong, for I am doping this out from memory, but after you get the idea you can figure out your own measurements in case any that I have given are wrong.

It is a couple of days' work to make one, but it is worth while, for it will sure take them if built right. You can plan some sort of a barrier on top of the large log at each end of the opening, A, Fig. 1, Plate 3, so that they can't get through by climbing on top of the large log. See Fig. 8. The two crosses locate the place for the two barriers.

Cover any wire or suspicious looking features of the snare with mud or leaves and splash lots of water on everything and leave it for a few weeks to season and look natural to the "varmints." And you might throw brush around over the fence in a careless manner to give it the appearance of a log or brush jam, being careful that none of it extends over the outside of the fence for them to climb over on.

The idea is to stop the animal and force him to investigate the layout until he finds and tries to go through the opening, A, Fig. 1.

If you meet with any difficulty, either in building the snare or reading the drawings, I will gladly help you out.

Just write me, explaining the part you don't understand, and I will try and make it clear.

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